

HEALTH — EMERGENCY SERVICES — GIBB RIVER ROAD

3242. Ms J. Farrer to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the provision of emergency health services to the area of Gibb River Road between Iminji and Ellenbrae in the Kimberley and I ask:

- (a) what consultation has taken place with residents in the area regarding emergency health services;
- (b) what vehicles and equipment does the department have at its disposal to ensure that residents Iminji and Ellenbrae are not cut off from health services; and
- (c) can the Minister assure residents of this area that they will receive the same level of health services as residents elsewhere in the Kimberley?

**Dr K.D. Hames replied:**

Answer as at 6 January 2015 —

- (a) The Shire of Derby–West Kimberley chairs the Local Emergency Management Committee where all aspects of emergency service provision within the Shire are tabled. A non-government organisation, the Derby Aboriginal Health Service (DAHS) provides the clinic services.
- (b) DAHS provides staffed health clinics at both Mt Barnett and Nullungundun. Both health clinics have a standard troupe carrier vehicle to assist with patient transport. Emergency road based patient transport services are provided throughout Western Australia by St John Ambulance (Western Australian) Pty Ltd Australia (SJA), under a contract with WA Health. In the absence of SJA, WA Country Health Service (WACHS) provides a 24-hour ambulance service in the towns of Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek.

The Derby service area includes a large section of the Gibb River Road where both road and aircraft are utilised depending upon the patient's condition and the availability and options of transport available.

The SJA service area on the Gibb River Road extends 150 kilometres from Kununurra and 150 kilometres from Wyndham. WACHS Kimberley has replaced their seven ambulance vehicles across the three sites over 2013–2014. Of these seven new vehicles, four of them are four-wheel-drive (4WD) dual stretcher ambulance vehicles designed specifically for off road use such as the Gibb River Road.

In addition to the 4WD ambulance vehicles, Derby Hospital has recently acquired a 4WD disaster trailer that can be mobilised to an accident scene, such as on the Gibb River Road, and provide extended care on scene whilst waiting for additional transport. SJA in Kununurra and Wyndham utilise 4WD ambulance vehicles in their fleet for the purpose of off road retrievals such as those on the Gibb River Road.

The Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) has two planes based in Derby and has access to additional resources, including helicopter if required. The helicopter is available through Kimberley Helicopter Services. They have a stretcher capable helicopter that can fly at night.

- (c) There are multiple airstrips along the Gibb River Road at pastoral stations that can be accessed by the RFDS. The decision to deploy an RFDS aircraft and crew along the Gibb River Road is made by RFDS using a risk assessment matrix taking into consideration patient condition, weather, and airstrip categories. Airstrips along the Gibb River Road include:

Charnley River Station

Drysdale River

Ellenbrae Station

Gibb River

Mitchell Plateau

Mount Barnett

Mount Elizabeth Station

Mount House Station

Old Mornington Station

Bell Gorge (Silent Grove)

Doongan Station

Home Valley Station

Windjana Gorge

There are structured response processes in place should a multi-casualty incident occur on the Gibb River Road. These responses are coordinated by WA Police who lead a multi-agency response which can and has involved the use of helicopter retrievals for time critical responses and can escalate to other services and resources as required, dependent on the emergency.

These processes are well established across the remote and isolated WA country areas and have been demonstrated during major incidents, in areas more remote than the Gibb River Road, e.g. Ashmore Reef.